

Giving a Pre-Filled Subcutaneous Injection

What is a subcutaneous injection?

A subcutaneous injection is a shot given into the fat layer between the skin and muscle. Subcutaneous injections are used to give small amounts of medicine.

These instructions will teach you how to give a subcutaneous injection with a pre-filled syringe. Your nurse will show you how to use your pre-filled syringe.

Step 1: Preparing the injection

Find a comfortable, well lit place to do your injection. If your injection is done once a day, plan to do it at the same time each day.

- Some medications are kept refrigerated, while others are kept at room temperature. If your medication needs to come to room temperature, remove the pre-filled syringe from the refrigerator 30 minutes before you give the injection.
- Prepare a clean work area where you can lay out all of your materials.
We do not recommend using the bathroom or the kitchen.
- **Do not shake the syringe.** Shaking it may damage the medication. If it has been shaken, the medication may look foamy and should not be used.

Step 1: Continued

- Make sure that the medication name on the package or syringe label matches what your doctor prescribed for you.
- Check to see that the expiration date on the syringe has not passed. If the date has passed, discard the syringe in the sharps container.
- Make sure that the strength of the medication is what your doctor prescribed. The strength is listed on the package.
- Check to make sure that the medication in the syringe is clear and colorless. **Do not use it if it looks discolored or cloudy, or if it has crystals in it.**

Gather your materials:

- ◇ Pre-filled syringe
- ◇ Alcohol pads/Rubbing alcohol and cotton balls
- ◇ Bandage
- ◇ Disposable sharps container or other puncture-resistant container

Step 2: Wash your hands

Wash your hands before giving any injection. You can wash your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitizer.

Correct hand-washing with soap and water:

- Wet your hands and wrists under warm or cold running water and apply soap.
- Work lather between fingers, under nails and over palms and backs of hand and wrists.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands and wrists well under clean running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean paper towel or let them air dry.

Step 2: Continued

Correct hand-washing with hand sanitizer (Lotions and Gels):

Look for a concentration of 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol alcohol when choosing a hand sanitizer. **Do not use hand sanitizer to wash your hands if: you have just used the toilet, they are visibly soiled, or if it is the first time you've washed your hands that day.**

- Apply the lotion or gel to the palm of one hand (read the label for the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Step 3: Choose an injection site

Choose an injection site from one of the following areas (Figure 1):

- The outer area of your upper arms.
- Your abdomen (belly), except for the 2 inch area around your belly button.
- The front of your middle thighs.
- The upper areas of your buttocks.

Keep track of which site was used last and change sites. Choosing a new site can help avoid soreness at any one site. Do not inject into an area that is tender, red, bruised, or hard.

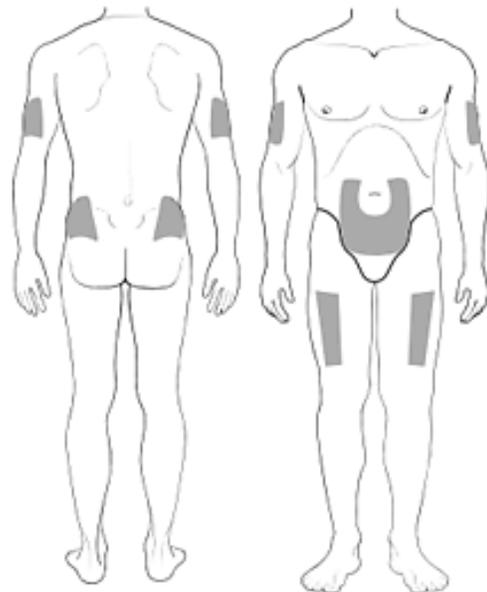


Figure 1: Injection sites

Step 3: Continued

- Fold back or remove any clothing that is covering the injection site.
- If you use a sealed alcohol pad, open the packet to expose the alcohol pad, but don't take it out. Set the open packet on your work area. You will use this alcohol pad to clean the skin at the injection site just before you give yourself the injection.
- If use a cotton ball and rubbing alcohol, get those materials ready and set them on your work area.

Step 4: Giving the injection

- Remove the syringe from the package.
- Hold the syringe around the middle like a pen. Carefully pull the needle cover straight off (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Pulling the needle cover off

- **Do not let anything, including your fingers, touch the needle.** If anything touches the needle, you must discard it in the sharps container. Call your doctor or nurse for instructions on what to do next.
- Using firm pressure, clean the skin on the injection site for 15 seconds. Allow your skin to dry before giving the injection.

Step 4: Continued

- Hold the syringe like you would a pen or pencil when writing. Use your other hand to pinch a fold of skin at the injection site.
- Insert the needle into your skin in one slow “dart like” motion. You can insert the needle straight up and down (90 degrees - see Figure 3) or at a slight angle (45 degrees).
- Keep muscles in the injection site relaxed.
- Do not change the direction of the needle as it goes in or comes out.
- After the needle is inserted, let go of your skin.
- Only use a needle once.



Figure 3: Inserting the needle at 90 degrees

- Use your thumb to slowly push the plunger all the way down (Figure 4). Push it until all the medication is injected. Your nurse may teach you to use your index finger rather than your thumb.



Figure 4: Pushing the plunger

- When the syringe is empty, pull it straight out of your skin. Place a cotton ball or gauze over the injection site and press it for several seconds. Apply a bandage if needed.
- Do not recap the needle. Be careful not to stick yourself. Most pre-filled syringes have some kind of needle guard. Your nurse will explain how to use your specific syringe and needle guard.
- Place the syringe and cover into the sharps container.

What container should I use to dispose of sharps?

If you cannot get a sharps container, use any empty, hard plastic container with a screw-on cap like a laundry detergent bottle. The container should be clearly labeled “**Used Sharps, Do Not Recycle**”. Always screw on the cap tightly after each use and store it in a safe location, out of reach of children and pets. Do not use glass or clear plastic containers, or containers with lids that can easily come off. Do not put sharp objects in any container you plan to recycle or return to a store.

If you receive your medical supplies from a home care provider, they may give you a sharps container with your supplies. If so, place all needles, syringes and lancets in this container. Call the company when the container is more than halfway full. Your home care provider will arrange for pick-up of the container.

For your safety, do not bring your container to the Rogel Cancer Center or University of Michigan Hospital for disposal.

Disposing of your home medical sharps

Most counties in Michigan offer residents a safe needle disposal program through solid waste divisions in each county. To find out if your county has a program, go to: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/whm-stsw-sharps-collection-list_196524_7.pdf. This will take you to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment website. There you'll find a list of counties with safe needle programs, contact names and phone numbers.

For the counties that don't offer a program you can follow the state guideline, which allows patients to place used needles/pen needles, lancets (sharps) in a household container such as a laundry detergent bottle, bleach bottle or other opaque sturdy plastic container with a screw-top lid. When that container is full, you should place it in your regular garbage - not recycling.

You may also contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at 1-800-643-1643 for information about the availability of safe disposal programs in your area.

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